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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 003792

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR A/S BLOOMFIELD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/WE;
OSD FOR DASD HOEHN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/29/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IT](#) [NATO](#) [FORCES](#) [IN](#) [ITALY](#)

SUBJECT: GDPR/ITALY: SCENESETTER FOR A/S BLOOMFIELD AND
DELEGATION

REF: A. STATE 207467

[1](#)B. ROME 2631

Classified By: DCM EMIL SKODON, REASONS 1.5 B AND D.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Embassy welcomes the visit of A/S Bloomfield and DASD Hoehn for consultations with Italy on the Global Defense Posture Review. While the Italians have no major concerns regarding the changes underway at Naples/Gaeta and Vicenza, they will be eager to hear the latest U.S. thinking on placing Special Operations Forces (SOF) at Sigonella. Freedom of deployment will be the key issue here. The Italians will listen carefully to any U.S. concerns about freedom of deployment but we expect they will be firm about sticking to the legal framework that allows U.S. forces to operate freely out of Italian bases for NATO purposes but requires Italian government approval for other missions. Embassy notes that historically Italy has almost always found ways to accommodate U.S. needs, and our most productive path in these talks may be to focus on a political understanding that allows for streamlined decision-making on non-NATO missions. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Meetings for A/S Bloomfield and delegation have been scheduled with Defense Minister Martino and MFA DG for Multilateral and Political Affairs Massolo (a working lunch). Post is also working on scheduling a meeting with CHOD Di Paola.

Favorable climate for Transformation

[1](#)3. (C) With the Berlusconi government, the U.S. enjoys the most favorable political environment possible in terms of securing a positive reception to our basing needs. Senior Italian military officials have told us that proposed changes to the U.S. military footprint in Italy make sense from an operational point of view and could increase opportunities for bilateral training. However, they note that some issues, especially regarding operating conditions, are politically extremely sensitive

Naples and Vicenza -- Smooth Sailing Ahead

[1](#)4. (C) The U.S. and Italy are in broad agreement on changes already underway with the U.S. Navy in Naples and with the U.S. Army in Vicenza. In an August 31 meeting with outgoing NAVEUR Commander Admiral Johnson, CHOD Di Paola said he was well aware of (and appeared at ease with) the proposed changes in Naples (moving NAVEUR and Commander Navy Region Europe (CNRE) from London and consolidating Sixth Fleet headquarters). Likewise, the relocation of the Sixth Fleet Command Staff to Naples -- leaving only the flag ship in Gaeta -- did not appear to be of major concern. Di Paola noted that there was plenty of tourism and other activities to support economic growth in Gaeta.

[1](#)5. (C) Similarly, the Italians are well aware of the proposed changes to SETAF headquarters in Vicenza, including the planned increase in the numbers from the current 2,900 ceiling to approximately 4,000 personnel and the related discussions regarding use of Dal Molin airport space to accommodate this increase. Di Paola has told us that if the U.S. Army's intent is merely to increase personnel under existing operating conditions, this is a simple matter. If, on the other hand, the U.S. was looking to change the operating conditions from those in the 1954 Bilateral Infrastructure Agreement, including the right to deploy, as A/S Bloomfield had discussed during his June visit (Ref B), then we needed to reach a "political understanding" before any such changes take place.

Sigonella -- Careful Navigation Needed

[1](#)6. (C) The Italians will be eager to hear the latest U.S. thinking regarding the future of Special Operations Forces

(SOF) at Sigonella. Di Paola has told us that consolidating

SOF at Sigonella will certainly require some sort of political agreement, especially regarding freedom to deploy, since the existing Base Infrastructure Agreement (BIA) governing the presence of U.S. forces in Italy foresees their use only for NATO-related purposes. He repeated the Italian government's view that trying to renegotiate the BIA would spark a political controversy. Even under the current pro-Bush Italian government, a renegotiated BIA would probably leave the U.S. worse off. Di Paola reiterated his hope that Italy could find a way under existing agreements to accommodate U.S. rapid-response type movements when necessary.

"Flexibility" v.s. Sovereignty

17. (C) Di Paola's views have been echoed by others. In a Sept. 28 meeting with DATT and POLMILCOUNS, Italian Defense General Staff (IDGS) J-3 General Giuseppe Marani underscored the sovereignty/deployment issue, stating that "no one could accept agreement in advance for direct intervention without host government approval." Imagine, he said, trying to manage the public and press reactions the next day. However, he confirmed that Italy would support the U.S. if given the opportunity to do so; if the U.S. were ever to make a request that was impossible for Italy to agree to, the Italians would let us know right away and work with us to find another solution. Marani added that, with understanding derived from long experience, Italy and the U.S. could accomplish anything together.

18. (C) Giovanni Brauzzi, Director of NATO Affairs at the MFA, shares Marani's views. He told us Sept. 27 that Italy will firmly adhere to the NATO provisions of the BIA and was willing to explore processes to guarantee rapid decision-making for non-NATO deployment requests. Rome, however, would have difficulty with a U.S. request for unlimited flexibility, which to Italy sounded like a surrender of sovereignty that would be politically unacceptable to any government. Brauzzi said Italy is considering recommending that the question of stationing U.S. SOF at Sigonella be referred to military-to-military talks as a next step.

19. (C) A/S Bloomfield and DASD Hoehn also need to be aware that in recent months the Italians have been pushing the U.S. to finalize the Sigonella Technical Arrangement (TA), which is designed to regularize day-to-day modalities but not to address policy issues. That ball now is in Italy's court. Italy has not yet responded to written proposals on the TA that we provided in April 2004. The negotiating teams are set to meet Oct. 22 in Rome, one week prior to the next Joint Military Commission meetings.

110. (C) Begin comment. Under the 1954 BIA, Italy permits U.S. forces to use its installations on Italian soil for NATO purposes -- and other purposes that the government agrees to. For non-NATO-related purposes, the Italians will insist on retaining the right to decide whether U.S. forces may deploy from sovereign Italian territory. They will not be willing to grant us carte blanche, but are willing to consider establishing a process that streamlines decision-making on non-NATO deployments on a case-by-case basis. In the past, Italy has almost always found a way to get to "yes" regardless of the political leanings of the Italian government of the day, though the process has not always been easy.

111. (C) This visit is timely and much anticipated by the Italian side. They are anxious for more clarity about U.S. plans for Sigonella and see great value in further consultation on flexibility/usability of force issues. We recommend, however, that the U.S. delegation avoid using the term "flexibility," which the Italians may interpret as seeking to wrest away from Italy the prerogative of approval for non-NATO missions. A focus on processes for rapid decision-making and a recognition of General Marani's theme that Italy will support U.S. requests if given an opportunity to do so strike us as valuable areas of focus. End comment.

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